
BOURGEOIS AND BOLSHEVIST

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Bourgeois and Bolshevik.

THE BOURGEOIS.

THE middle-class society which rose into power in Britain and France during the early decades of the nineteenth century has a long list of achievements to its credit. Its type of civilization spread to most civilized countries bringing with it the same kind of freedom and fostering the same spirit of economic and humanitarian progress which characterized it in its original homes. Much later in the century the influence of the United States and also of the great British colonies, all genuine descendants of Anglo-Saxondom in their social institutions, was a powerful reinforcement to this middle-class civilization and added, moreover, a touch of democratic humanity which made it more flexible. And there was great need of the reinforcement, for in the seventies one of the pillars of European democracy, France, had suffered a great loss of prestige. Many of her eminent thinkers, like Taine and Renan, not to mention equally eminent names in the Catholic reaction, had begun to question the value of the results of the great Revolution. Most significant of all was the strong and highly intellectual reaction which had its centre in Germany. From that quarter came a sharp and profound criticism of all the characteristic principles and tendencies of middle-class civilization as it had established itself in the great democracies. Its views of representative government, of majority rule and Parliamentary rights, its views of the constitutional limitations of monarchy and of the functions of the state, its policy in trade and war, its combination of utilitarian motives with sentimental humanitarianism and superficial religion, its speculative timidity (in the philosophic sense), its illogical and hypocritical compromises, all these were analysed and exposed with the patient thoroughness of the German mind. Of course there was much truth in it, the truth which there is in any criticism which contrasts a practical working system with

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logical perfection. There was even more truth in it than that. The middle-class had its special weaknesses and the civilization it had created was beginning to be deeply tainted by them.

The great political creation of the middle-class was Parliamentary government, originally a weapon against despotic monarchs which England had been slowly forging and tempering since the seventeenth century, but in its later development a remarkably flexible and comprehensive means of finding and expressing the collective wisdom and experience of the nation. It was no longer the organ of the middle-class alone as it had once been, a wide franchise had made it capable of representing all classes. But just as important were the social ideals and tendencies which middle-class civilization brought with it. These were in many ways an advance on the standards of the past. I don't mean that they were new ideals in the history of humanity but that they now, for the first time, got that kind of recognition which made them dominant elements in civilization. Respect for freedom of thought and conscience, respect for freedom of speech, a humanitarian dislike of government by violence and bloodshed, a new sense of responsibility for the condition of the poor, a disposition towards a mild rather than a severe administration of penal laws, these features distinguish sharply middle-class civilization from that of all the societies that preceded it. Of course the application of these principles was never absolute and unlimited. It never can be in human affair. It was limited at times by the necessities of State, it might be thwarted at times by class interests, or racial and religious prejudice, but on the whole it went forward as steadily as the mixed and highly complicated nature of modern society permits, with results which are obvious to all to-day. You have only to contrast it with the methods of Prussia before the war or with those of the workmen's republic in Russia to-day.

This middle-class civilization was in the main the work of what I may call Liberalism, it was inspired by it even when it was carried out by political parties of another name. For a time, therefore, especially in England, Liberalism was closely associated, almost identifiable with the power and influence of the manufacturers and business men that constituted the

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strongest section of the party. It inevitably adopted their economic creed. The most practical achievement of the middle-class has been their economic development of the life of nations. Production, transportation, exploitation of all resources have been carried to a point undreamed of before. Great wealth was accumulated and while much of it went to improve, little by little, the living conditions of millions of workers, a good part of it was more obviously consolidated in the mansions and parks and money power of the employers. It was a civilization largely based on business activity and—at a time when the direct power of both the aristocracy and the church had receded—it drew most of its principles, even its humanitarian and philanthropic ones, from association with business activity. This side of it was the inspiration of men like Bright and Cobden. The wealthy and energetic manufacturer like Mr. Milbank in Disraeli's *Coningsby* was highly conscious of his usefulness as a creator of employment and activity in contrast with the idle aristocrat of that time who was a rival power in the district. He was proud of his ability, his diligence, his rectitude in the market. 'Free competition and private enterprise' were his watchwords, for he was in a good position to compete, England's coal mines being behind him and the Englishman's long training in self-government. Some after-glow of that ideal lived down to our own time gilding on this continent the magnificent operations of a Rockefeller and a Morgan with a heroic Napoleonic splendour in the eyes of the public. Then the wind blew—*Spiravit Deus*—in 1907; the currents of popular sentiment changed and all this activity became associated with reproach, almost with ignominy. Exploitation was the complaint, and most of the great chiefs in the business world had to appear at the bar of Justice like criminals.

The basic principle of this middle-class society was Utilitarianism. It had its great prophets in Mill and Spencer and produced a powerful school of thought as admirable for its exposition of economic system as it was weak in its perception of the manner in which other elements must be blended in social organization to make it work healthfully and happily. It is true, the middle-class in spite of its business utilitarian-

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ism had preserved a considerable respect for what it considered sound tradition and being as a class naturally inclined to compromises and concessions, it applied its utilitarian principle with liberality enough to find a place for literature and art, for humanitarian and philanthropic ideals, but these were really only adjuncts, outside elements added to its system, not an organic or vital part of it. This was the real point in Ruskin's criticism of it, a point mostly missed both by his economic and his aesthetic critics. In the same way it maintained religious tradition, though every decade that passed was making clearer the gulf between that and the principles by which it lived and worked. That inconsistency, however, is in a way natural to humanity, being akin to the difference between an ideal rule and the frailty of human practice. But the gulf got very wide indeed and hostile critics like the Germans and Red Socialists began, from their different points of view, to brand the religion of "the bourgeois" as mere hypocrisy. But it was not that, it was still a kind of limiting principle in middle-class civilization, especially in its humanitarian aspects, and distinguishes it sharply from the cynical ruthlessness of a Junker or Bolshevik society.

Of course Utilitarianism may be explained so as to include every virtue under the sun, "all the permanent interests of man as a progressive being," as Mill defines it in a comprehensive yet subtly qualified phrase; but as you see clearly in its theories of education it can include them only as elements subordinate to its own principle. It tends therefore in actual operation to establish materialistic values and standards for society, all the more that its original formula, the happiness of the greatest number, can be readily used to reduce society to its lowest terms. Societies seem to perish mostly by pushing the principle on which they rest to an extreme, and utilitarianism soon began to show deterioration in its own region of economics where a high ideal of individualism had been expounded and defended by Mill. But *corruptio optimi pessima*. Free competition became first fierce competition then unscrupulous and fraudulent competition. At first a healthy stimulant, it became a cut-throat form of struggle, leading to a general riot of overreaching, deception of the public, manipu-

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lation of markets and gross forms of puffing and advertising. In self-defence big business had to take to the form of large trusts and combinations tending to become unassailable monopolies. Many of them, no doubt, were honest with the public; others were notoriously not so. There was a partial attempt on the part of Government to break them up which could not seem to have resulted in any practical benefit to the public so far at least as profiteering is concerned. The virus has spread too widely. From every side come tales of extortion; Government Reports from Ottawa and Washington compile formal records of them.* Instead of services to the community, profit to the individual has become the one consideration in business. The ordinary tradesman would be amazed to hear of any other principle involved in his existence. What he can exact from the helplessness of the buyer is his standard. Hundreds of illustrations are within the experience of every one. It would be a nice business for the economist to classify and illustrate all the subtle forms of "exploitation" which are current in our life. Twenty-five years ago I took an Investment Insurance policy from a Toronto Company. Their agent's estimates, given in a formal document, were that at the end of 20 years I might withdraw a cash surplus of \$3,256 or receive an annuity of \$260. I had the document sent up to the Head Office and countersigned as "correct" in its estimates by the General Manager. But when the policy matured, all the Insurance Company actually offered me was \$621 of cash surplus or an annuity of \$60. The Manager who had countersigned the estimates was dead, and I could get no interview with his successor, but the Actuary coolly told me, when I threatened a lawsuit, to go ahead, they had a fund for fighting such cases. Of course I know estimates are estimates, but the case is illustrative of the spirit in which business has been conducted. It was simply a way of cutting out more scrupulous companies.

This disease to which our middle-class civilization is so peculiarly susceptible was long ago diagnosed as a deadly one

The case, for example, of the Ottawa restaurant making a profit of \$4.90 on every pound of bacon used by its customers.

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by such thinkers as Carlyle, Froude and Ruskin, but it suited the views of neither of the great political parties nor those of political publicists and economists to give any support to such teaching. What professor of economy would ever think of prescribing Ruskin's *Unto This Last* for his students' reading, or of insisting on the *truths* it expresses? If he mentions it at all, it is probably to notice with a sneer some inadequacy in a definition or some antiquated appeal, as he thinks, to the wisdom of Dante or of the Bible. But Ruskin's views formulate exactly the questions which have become the urgent problems of civilization to-day while Mill's fundamental principles have become nearly as useless as the steam machinery of his time. The principles of the older school of Liberalism indeed were distinctly on the other side. The following paragraph from one of Froude's essays will illustrate the situation out of which the storm-clouds of to-day have arisen:

It was proved, in the *Lancet*, after a series of elaborate investigations, that the smaller retail trade throughout the country was soaked with falsehood through and through. Scarcely one article was sold in the shops of the poor, which was really the thing it pretended to be. . . . Attention was called to the subject in the House of Commons by Lord Eustace Cecil; and perhaps of all the moral symptoms of the age, the most significant is the answer which was given on that occasion by the President of the Board of Trade. The poor were and are the chief sufferers by fraud of this kind. Mr. Bright has risen to distinction as the poor man's friend; and those and analogous complaints, with the general approbation of his party, he treated with impatient ridicule. He spoke of adulteration as a natural consequence of competition. He resisted inquiry. "Adulteration," he said, "arises from the very great and perhaps inevitable competition in business, and to a large extent it is promoted by the ignorance of customers." He looked for a remedy in education, which would enable the poor to take care of themselves.†

Mr. Bright came of a family of Lancashire manufacturers and his speech no doubt reflects their special prejudices against any governmental interference with trade, but it also reflects

†Froude. *Short Studies on Great Subjects*: (England and her Colonies).

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very clearly the influence of an economic creed which tended always to leave it an open question "whether the general welfare will or will not be promoted" by such interference and tended to answer it in the negative where it possibly could. To Froude, on the other hand, the case for interference was as clear as if it were a case of burglary. The one man thought mainly of the interests of trade, the other of the moral health of the nation. But it is true that to Bright and his school the vigorous expansion of trade was an exact measure of the national health..

We have got the length now of punishing adulteration of food and some other gross forms of swindling. Wherever the Government can go effectively, it is now willing to go. But there is a widespread greed and unscrupulousness in the modern business spirit which the Government cannot reach and does not know how to deal with. Only business men themselves, headed by the bigger and wiser amongst them, could set about reforming it. A league for that purpose might be as useful as any league of all the nations is likely to be at present. I am not sure but it is the more pressing need of the two. The point Carlyle and Ruskin insisted on is the essential one. Respect for the principles on which society is based is the only thing which can hold a free society together. Indeed that has always been the necessary condition of a stable society, whether it was a Jewish theocracy, a Roman aristocracy, or a mediaeval feudalism. When that respect begins to fail, the chaotic flood of Revolution is not far off. All Eastern Europe is already engulfed in its wild waters. It is very evident that the thoughtful heads in the Government and in big business are alive to the danger in one direction, that which is connected with the growing demands of organized labour. They seek to meet it by constantly greater concessions with regard to wages and hours. But there is no ultimate salvation on that line. It becomes a vicious circle. The wage increases tend to make themselves general and prices go up with wages. Besides, it is a remedy dependent on certain conditions of prosperity, and one which may have a disturbing effect on the social condition of other classes. In any case concessions of thirty or forty dollars a week are not going to satisfy men

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for ever, who see many others making five hundred or a thousand dollars a week, not if it is a mere question of economics and using the advantage of position to extort all one can. Nothing but respect for the honesty of the means by which the superior position is acquired can still the envy of the labouring millions or give the superior minority the moral power to defend and maintain that position as a rightful one. That is about all, any way, that the most radical revolution can achieve for the working masses. The rest is a change of names: Haase sitting in the gilt chair of the Chancellor's Palace instead of von Bethman-Hollweg. A helpful use of wealth must also count greatly in giving stability to society, especially with those who understand the many subtle values to be preserved in a high civilization. In all ages private wealth has done much to enrich life that the State cannot do and will not do. Even Greece owed its great drama to that source.

This is a source of unrest which may give Bolshevism its best recruits. Every manifesto the Bolshevist issues appeals to the need of emancipating the people from what he calls the exploitation of capital. He speaks of course from a point of view opposed to the existence of capitalism in any form, but what gives point to his appeals is the unscrupulous use of capital. Profiteering may be difficult to define, as motion is in metaphysics, but we all know that like motion it exists none the less and no ratiocinations are going to cover up its character any longer. The word itself is a new addition to our vocabulary and marks the new consciousness of the age in such things.

I was breakfasting in one of the big New York hotels last week, when the waiters' strike was impending. I got on as good terms as I could with the waiter who served me in order to get him to talk freely. He was a foreigner and of the sensitive, hot-headed type that will say everything that is in his mind if you can once start him. "What's the trouble," I asked, "wages?"—"Yes, and the way we are treated, worked like slaves."—"Well, you are on your feet a good deal, of course," I said sympathetically, "but I don't suppose your work is really as hard as that of the Irish porter who brought my trunk up and he seems very cheerful and contented."—"Ah, the Irish,"

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he said, "they get all the good things in New York, they are on the top in politeecs. That's why . . . But all they pay me is \$1.20 a day:"—"But you make a good deal more in tips, don't you?"—"Yes, perhaps two or three dollars more."—"And sometimes four or five or six more," I suggested.—"Yes, sometimes," he admitted, "if you are a favourite of the head-waiter's, you can make that, he gives you the best guests; if you're not, you get only the tight wads and ladies staying in the hotel." And at this point, the head waiter being out of sight, he lifted the discourse into high politics. "It is the seestemm," he said with emphasis. "The seestemm is bad. Now, you pay the bus driver that brings you here; you tip the porter that handles your luggage and the bell-boy that takes you to your room, and the chambermaid. They (meaning the hotel ownership) make you pay their servants," he said, trying to enlist my sympathies on this side; "they have raised the price of the rooms and the food; they make you pay \$1.20 for those seven small thin slices of bacon at breakfast; they call it a double portion," he added satirically; they make 500 per cent. on the drinks they serve; they build more big houses, palaces, for themselves than they can live in, but they haven't raised our wages. They want you to pay that too."—"Still," I ventured to remark, "with five and sometimes six dollars a day and your food, you are pretty well off for a young unmarried man."—"It is the seestemm that is bad," he repeated moodily, and as the system just then made its appearance in the shape of the head waiter stepping inquisitively towards us, he hurried away. But I had gathered enough from his talk to suspect that if they trebled his wages, he would know how to exact his tips all the same. What he really felt was that the hotel owners were exploiting the situation as much as they possibly could and that he had as good a right to do the same.

The abuse of a system is sure to bring about a radical change unless a timely remedy is found for it. If it cannot be remedied it is a sign that it is worn out. When the prices of milk and ice began to soar in New York, the Mayor had to threaten to set up municipal establishments for those commodities. The working men may begin to take the matter in their own hands in a spirit and on a scale marking a long

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Marxian advance on the simple economic ideas of the old co-operative societies. The other day I received a Prospectus from a co-operative society formed by working men. It starts off straight with the complaint that "the capitalist or competitive system" has taught the trader to think only of the profit he can make and not at all of the services he owes to the community and has led, therefore, to combinations "to increase prices artificially."

There will be no successful reply to that criticism unless our great mercantile middle-class will seriously take in hand to reform the spirit of modern trading and make it evident to the public that it is doing so. And I should think that is not beyond the power of the able and energetic men who are at the head of the system, the president and directors of banks, railways, industries, department stores and the like. Will they get together in a "gentlemanly agreement" for that end? A democratic party government, one sees, is as good as helpless in such matters. It does not dare to go far enough, and we don't want the barbarism of a Bolshevik rule. It is long ago now since Ruskin wrote:: "It is the merest insolence of selfishness to preach contentment to a labourer who gets thirty shillings a week, (*say nowadays, a hundred*) while we suppose an active and plotting covetousness to be meritorious in "a man who has three thousand a year." *

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The victory of the Entente Allies and the consequent withdrawal of the German pressure on Russia have given the Bolsheviks a new standing in the world and a kind of credit which they certainly would never have attained under the heavy hand of an undefeated Germany. The treaty of Brest-Litovsk is torn up and the heads of the Central Soviet are no longer receiving—and meekly obeying—orders from officers of the German General Staff.† Already they are showing what they understand by the free self-determination of peoples by send-

**Time and Tide*. Letter II.

†See the documents sent to Washington by Mr. Sisson and published in *Current History* of the New York Times for December.

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ing armies into Esthonia and Poland to terrorize these districts into their way of thinking. The casual correspondents of some well-known newspapers are again beginning to express their views that there is something in Lenin and Trotsky after all. Even Maxim Gorky, who a little while ago was protesting against their doings as those of ignorant surgeons experimenting recklessly with their patient, seems inclined to change his tune, at least to the extent of barring outside interference. Their fatuity in negotiation with the Germans seems forgotten as well as their treachery and hardly concealed malice towards the Allies. The Bolshevik held up his hands at once wherever the German armies appeared and did whatever he was bidden to do whether it was to give up a province of Russia or pay an indemnity, or tie up what was left of his country for the commercial exploitation of Germany. But he is quite aware of a certain embarrassment the Entente democracies have in dealing effectively with him and means to take full advantage of it. The social idea which inspires him is as hostile to the constitutional democracy of Britain, France or America as the republicanism of the French revolutionaries was to the old monarchies of Europe. It is a grandiose idea, that of a new Labour civilization created by Russia and to be spread over Europe, over the world. It is the new holy mission of Russia, Dostoeffsky's old idea put into a definite form, with a definite programme. It is quite possible the Bolshevik leaders have succeeded in inspiring the masses behind them with an enthusiasm for this ideal equal to that which the old Panslavism used to generate in Russian hearts. At bottom it may be much the same spirit and is likely to be an even greater terror to neighbouring countries than the old Imperialism was. It is in the very nature of such a movement to seek to extend its conquest with the religious ardour of Islam or of the French Revolution in their early days. Indeed it can hardly help it. It is doubtful if a country all whose industries from manufacturing, banking and farming to selling groceries are to be conducted by committees of working men, popularly elected, could compete on any terms with countries organized on what the Bolshevik calls the bourgeois or capitalist system. In order to live Bolshevism

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must make itself universal and it will make every effort to do so.

We know little of what is taking place in Russia. Bolshevik censorship is a model. A little ahead, I should say, of the Inquisition in its best days. Freedom of speech is a bourgeois idea for which they have no particular use in a Soviet Republic. Rumours, however, do reach us of conflicts in the streets and of peasant risings fiercely suppressed. Indeed one can imagine the thrifty Russian farmer will have difficulty in appreciating his "new liberty" when the Government announces there is to be a "merciless" requisitioning of his grain and the local Soviets take a walk over his fields with an eye to their just re-distribution next year. But it is impossible to conceive the condition of a country where individual property and inheritance have been abolished and where all laws that the Soviet dictators may consider to be inconsistent with Soviet principles are *ipso facto* repealed. It is evident that the Bolshevik government is keeping a considerable force of soldiers in every district, a Bolshevik garrison for the suppression of all opposition, and I see in one of their Decrees that such troops are to elect two representatives to the local Soviet for every company or squadron stationed in the place. Lenine and Trotzky seem to have got rid of property but they don't seem to have been equally successful with the old enemies of militarism and bureaucracy that they used to denounce so fervidly. Of course there has been and will continue to be the confusion, violence and widespread misery which accompany great revolutions. "The soldiers are frantic with their new liberties and understand nothing"—so a Russian colonel told the Princess Cantacuzene. Whether it can settle down into anything workable, no one can tell. There was published recently in the international section of *The Nation* a pretty full collection of Soviet constitutional Decrees. I note the following points as indicating what is new in this great social experiment:—

1. Property.

"Private ownership of land is abolished. All forests, minerals and waters . . . all estates and agricultural enterprises . .

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all factories, mills, mines, railways, and other means of production and transportation . . . all banks" are transferred to the ownership of the Soviet Republic.

2. *Industrial organization.*

"For the purpose of the organization and regulation of the entire economic life . . . there are organized district Boards of National Economy." These are to work "under the district and local Soviets." Their membership consists of (a) representatives elected by workmen's committees, (b) representatives elected by the district Soviets of soldiers and workmen, (c) "representatives of the technical and commercial management of enterprises (numbering not more than one-third of the entire membership of the Board)." The District Boards will be "directed by the Supreme Council of National Economy" and be "under the general control" of the Central Soviet.

The typical form of representation in the Soviets for the smaller cities is as follows:—

"Every enterprise employing 100 persons sends one representative."

"Enterprises employing less than 50 persons combine, if possible, with other small kindred enterprises and send a common representative to the Soviet."

"The soldiers of a local garrison send to the Soviet their representatives on the following principle: each company, squadron, command, etc., elects two representatives to the Soviet; clerks, horse reserves and other small units, send one representative each." [*Our new Potsdam Grenadiers and Royal Bodyguards.*]

A presidium or chief executive of five (a chairman, two vice-chairmen and two secretaries) is elected as "the directing organ of the Soviet." It meets four times a week and "decides independently all matters which cannot suffer delay."

3. *Bureaucracy.*

The local Soviets are declared to be "quite independent in regard to questions of a local character," but must always act "in accord with the decrees of the Central Soviet Government as well as of the larger bodies, the district provincial and regional Soviets, of which they form a part."

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The Central Administration for any industrial line has entire control of its exports and imports and the provision of its raw material and machinery. It can compel "the higher personnel" of an establishment to work in the places they occupy. It can also sequester the enterprises of any establishment not yet nationalized [*no objection to bureaucratic control, evidently when it is in our own hands!*]

4. Law.

"All existing general legal institutions, such as district courts, courts of appeal, commercial courts, etc., are abolished and replaced by courts established on the basis of democratic elections. . . . Local judges are henceforth to be elected on the basis of direct democratic vote. . . ."

"All laws are considered annulled which contradict the decrees of the Central Executive Committees," the programmes of the Labour and Socialist-Revolutionary parties or offend "the revolutionary conscience and revolutionary conception of right."

Special "Revolutionary Tribunals" are established for the trial of proceedings against profiteering, speculation, sabotage and other misdeeds of merchants, manufacturers, officials and other persons" . . . and for "the struggle against the counter-revolutionary forces." [*Practical revival of the old and much denounced Star-Chamber, absolved, too, from all legal and constitutional precedents.*]

5. Censorship of Press and Publications.

An extra-special "Revolutionary Tribunal" is created for the control of the Press, or, as the Bolshevik Decree puts it, for "crimes and offences against the people committed by means of the press." It consists of three members chosen by the Soviet who conduct both the investigation and the trial of the case. Its decisions "are final and are not subject to appeal."

The works of any author may be transferred from private to public ownership . . . and be declared a Government monopoly. . . . The Government may publish a "scientific" or an "abbreviated edition" of such works "to be sold at cost and even below cost."

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The Government is also "to see to the publication of all sorts of text-books" and it may "subsidize publications useful to the general public."

[A very rigorous censorship and a most ingenious form of control. The Government may declare the works of any author it does not approve of a Government monopoly and publish them only in a specially edited or abbreviated form, or even not publish them at all. This has our poor old despotisms with their Imprimaturs and Index Expurgatorius beaten hollow].

6. Marriage.

Civil marriage is made ob'igatory and is the only kind recognized by the Government. An oral declaration at the city hall from the pair is sufficient. It may also be written.

Marriage may be annulled by the local judge on the mutual consent of the parties or on the petition of one of them. The judge may also determine all questions regarding the maintenance of wife and children.

"Children born out of wedlock are on an equality with those born in wedlock both with regard to the rights and duties of parents towards children, and of children toward parents." *[The Bolshevik attempt to settle the great sexual question. All Ibsenite reclamations for moral freedom and Women's Rights oratory are made antiquated at a stroke by these decrees and the one following on inheritance. The need of that declaration at the City Hall is not quite apparent.]*

7. Inheritance.

"Inheritance whether by law or by will is abolished. After the death of an owner, the property which belonged to him, whether movable or immovable, becomes the property of the Government." Full or half brothers and sisters and the wife of the deceased, if they are incapable of work, may "receive support from the property left by the deceased." . . . "No distinction is made here between the relationship that arises within wedlock and that which arises outside of wedlock."

[The great redeeming altruistic spring of energy and loving sacrifice in the ordinary man is destroyed, the providing for the future of his children.]

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8. Control of Farming.

An end must be put to the greed of grain-profiters, the Soviet Decree of May 14, 1918, declares. The Central Executive Committee therefore decrees:

"Confirming the fixity of the grain monopoly (of the Government) and fixed prices, and also the necessity of a merciless struggle with grain profiteers, to compel each grain-owner to declare the surplus above what is needed to sow the fields and for personal use . . . until the new harvest and to surrender the same within a week after the publication of this decision in each township." One half the value of concealed surpluses is to be paid to the person who gives information of them to the Revolutionary Tribunal. The penalty for concealment of surplus grain is imprisonment for not less than ten years and confiscation of the entire property of the guilty.

[The language of this Decree reveals and indeed openly admits the existence of a bitter struggle between the farmers of the townships and the rule of the Soviets. The Decree denounces the farmers as "bourgeoisie" and incites the "poorer peasants" to a "merciless struggle" against them.]

9. Labour

All establishments are subject to the eight-hour law for labour, and no one is permitted to work for hire before the age of 15. Next year the age limit will be raised to 20. (Decree of October 29, 1917).

[This looks as if the Bolshevik meant to have a high grade of education for every one.]

There is, of course, no provision in the Soviet decrees for the summoning of a Parliament or national assembly to give a general expression to the opinion of the nation. On the contrary, the Bolshevik manifestoes indicate frankly that they do not want that bourgeois organ of free self-government. The way they put it is, "at the moment of the decisive battle of the people with their exploiters, there can be no place for the latter in any of the organs of government. So in Germany the extreme group has pronounced against the calling of a national assembly, Rosa Luxembourg declaring it must be prevented "at all costs." That is no doubt the meaning of the

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just announced attempt of the Independent Socialists to overthrow the Ebert government. (January 7.) That is, there is to be no place for any expression of opinion but their own. Under the name of a republic the Bolsheviks have created a beautiful new set of autocrats and bureaucrats presiding with absolute power over every department of the national life and controlling not only its industry, its commerce and agriculture but even its thinking and sources of knowledge to their own ends. Truly, there is a great similarity between the autocratic instincts of the Prussian Junker and the Russian Bolshevik both, and both have shown an utter contempt for the principles of humanity in the use of force. The published programme of the Bolshevik, as we have seen, is "mercilessness," that of the Junker was "*Schrecklichkeit*" or frightfulness. The difference was only in the class each represents. But of the two the Bolshevik is the more arbitrary and ruthless in procedure, the more contemptuous of world-opinion, of that limit which the highly developed sentiment of a common humanity, of the *societas humani generis* imposes even on the most reckless government of our time. No other government would have murdered in cold blood the helpless women of the Imperial family; no other government would have been capable of the entirely shameless treachery to the Allies of Russia revealed by the Sisson documents. Any nation that enters into negotiations with the Bolshevik government will have to keep such facts in mind. The Russian seems to be a combination of high sensibility and a stupid brutality. That is the impression you get of the typical Russian from Gogol and Dostoiéffsky, from Chekoff and Gorky alike, especially from the terrible revelations in Gorky's recent book, *My Childhood*. One moment he may be thinking of murdering you in one of his sombre moods and the next he may be hanging in tears on your neck. In neither case has he the restraints of a strong and firm civilization, but acts by a kind of fatalistic impulse which really takes no account of consequences. The strong and stable societies of the world will have to look after those children among the nations—now so many of them have been set loose—or there will be endless disorder. The task is not

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going to be a light one but it is probably better than having nothing to think of but chasing the dollar.

The ideal of social reconstruction which the Soviet Decrees outline is logical enough and complete on paper; it is a bold defiance by facile and irreverent enthusiasts of the wisdom and best experience of mankind, a bold attempt to clear the decks of a somewhat encumbered civilization by throwing everything overboard. They present it to the world mainly as a relief from the exploitation of the bourgeois and it draws most of its strength from the excesses of our present system rather than from its own merits. Its own programme is clearly at variance with the working conditions of human nature, and even if it should hold its own in Russia will have to undergo considerable modification. For Russia after all is the land of Rasputins as well as of Krapotkins and Tolstois; it is the land where a Chichikov could trade in "dead souls," and very poorly prepared, I should think, for a system which implies the very highest standards of rectitude and performance in its officials and citizens. Otherwise it is likely to become, as the French Revolution was for some years, a debauch of officialdom, great and petty.

Bourgeois civilization, as they call it, may be made a reasonable mean between these two analogous extremes of Prussian Junkerism and Russian Bolshevism. It has successfully repelled the attack of the one and broken it after a desperate struggle. The struggle with the other may be longer and to many seems at present full of danger. But the bourgeoisie is an immense class in our modern democracy ranging from the business and professional man to the small farmer or trader and the technical expert, and easily including the thrifty and well-to-do workmen. As a class it tends naturally, as its history shows, to a gradual peaceful readjustment of class relations as society

*In a late Decree the Central Administrations "are permitted, in order to facilitate the change' (from private to socialized enterprise) "to pay to the highest technical and commercial personnel their present salaries" and to compel them to work.

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develops new conditions. It will never lend itself to the widespread misery and devastation of a social revolution unless things become intolerable, as they did in the France of 1789 and the Russia of 1816. Its strength for the maintenance of society in this sense is irresistible if you can keep it together in sentiment. But to do that our politicians and leading business men will have to get together and do a little house-cleaning.

THE BRIT: ELECTIONS.

The British elections evidently affirm with unusual emphasis the conviction of the people that a strong and vigorous government, standing somewhat above the mere party point of view, is needed to handle the present world crisis. They have given Lloyd-George such a mandate as practically to extinguish opposition. They have swept away all those sectional, class, and party leaders who might be even suspected of attempting to make party capital out of the situation. Not only extreme men, Labour chiefs like Arthur Henderson and Ramsay Macdonald, but solid and respected party lieutenants like Runciman, Simon, McKenna, Samuel, have gone down in the avalanche. Even Asquith himself has been rejected by that staid Scotch constituency of Fife which he has represented for so many years. It looks as if the British people, ordinarily so ready to listen to all sides and give even the most extravagant minority a patient hearing, had made up its mind that this is no time for faction or factious criticism. They are tired of Spenders and Ponsonbys, tired of hearing every enemy they have quoting Mr. Ramsay Macdonald or Mr. Brailsford or G. B. Shaw as representing an important section of public opinion, tired of red flag meetings at Albert Hall and of foreign gentlemen who lead in singing the Internationale and are probably thinking what a fine place London would be for a little Bolshevik *battue* of the bourgeois. Even Labour often supported the Coalition candidate against the Labour nominee. It may not last but it is decisive for the moment. Lloyd-George, the British people have agreed, is the man for the crisis. He has all the personal prestige now and therefore the power requisite for strong action; he acts with courage and

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decision in the face of peril, and he knows better than any other man how to put his case before the public.

The election is the measure of the doubts and apprehensions of the British people. After four years of a tremendous struggle and terrible experiences they feel the necessity of looking squarely at the facts and putting aside the potions of soothing syrup offered from the usual quarters.* The position of Germany is still ambiguous. She has still great armies in the field; it is true her fleet is gone but it was never of very much use to her. No compensation has been fixed yet for the immense devastation she has caused. She has ruined Belgium and northern France, despoiled them of their machinery, destroyed their mines and factories, decimated and broken the spirit of their working population with the deliberate intention of reducing their power of competition. With the same idea she has sunk a great number of Britain's freight carrying ships along with their crews. She has raided Serbia. She is coming now to the Conference table with the hope of getting rid of as much of all that responsibility as possible. The German papers give great space to Erzberger's declaration that indemnities are to be restricted and every nation is to pay its own costs. The New York *Staatszeitung* had in big letters across its front page: "*Jede Nation soll ihre Kriegskosten tragen.*" There will be wrangling over Alsace-Lorraine, wrangling over the rich district of the Sarre which France lost with her defeat in 1815, wrangling over the German colonies. And the debtor, or criminal, comes in a change of clothes in which you hardly know whether he is the same man or not. The present Chancellor, Ebert, was the Kaiser's nominee, and, according to Kurt Eisener, the Bavarian premier, most of the old bureaucracy are still in their places. Even if the extreme Socialists should get the upper hand, a combination of Russian and German Bolsheviks might be a serious menace to peace. Nor does the situation elsewhere look as if it could be settled by mutual agreements amongst the peoples or by anything but the old-fashioned system of pressure from a combination

*The assurances, for example, of Mr. A. G. Gardiner that once we get rid of gold-spectacled diplomacy, etc., all our wars and troubles will be over.

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of the great Powers. It is impossible to define the boundaries of nations in Eastern Europe, either from the point of view of population, racial affinity, or historical claims, so as to satisfy all the peoples concerned. In Lithuania the Poles and Russians are cutting each others' throats; in Posen, Poles and Germans ditto. Poland's way to the sea involves the mutilation of Prussia. The Bolsheviki are overrunning Esthonia plundering and murdering, mainly the German "bourgeoisie" there, I suppose, but they will not be particular in the case of a well-to-do Lettish farmer. The Italians have a hot quarrel with the new Jugo-Slav federation over Istria and the Dalmatian coast. In Spalato, where the Jugo-Slav population is dominant, they are maltreating Italian sailors. The whole of Dalmatia is flooded, says the *Bolletino della Sera*, with German-Austrian propagandists making all the trouble they can. Italy also claims the Brenner Pass both as its natural right and as scientific frontier against the German. President Wilson, who has a large Italian population at home to consider, has gone to Rome to help in composing matters. He is received with great enthusiasm, of course, but the resignation of Leonida Bissolati from the Italian Cabinet means that the Government is to press its claims, and these claims are supported by the compact the Allies made with Italy in their hour of need, before President Wilson had made up his mind to come in.

Czecho-Slovaks, Magyars, Serbs and Roumanians are all involved in bitter disputes arising from an indescribable complication of racial feeling, economic interests and undefined boundaries. The Paris Conference cannot satisfy all of them; probably it will not quite satisfy any of them. Then the Tyrol, the Baltic provinces, Armenia, Mesopotamia, etc., are also seeking separation and independence on the principle of the self-determination of peoples. So is little Gottschee, which is somewhere in Carniola, if you look for it in a big map. Even the Turks in Constantinople, I see, are appealing—through Ameer Ali—to President Wilson: "Do we not also come in under the great principle of self-determination?"

Then there is Ireland, or at least the Sinn Fein part of it, as a special problem for the British people. No doubt they are asking themselves, "What effect would a separated Ireland,

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under Sinn Fein government, with an army of its own and harbours all ready for German submarines, have on the peace of the world?" And indeed it is a sobering reflection that it might add seriously to the task of Britain and make the load for France and the United States as co-guardians of peace correspondingly heavier. It would have much the same effect as if the French-speaking province of Quebec were separated from English-speaking Canada. Yet the Irish are closer to the British in the use of a common language, a common literature, a common social development, they are more intermixed in blood and marriage than is the case with Quebec and English-speaking Canada. The poetry of their Moores and Magees, their Yeatses and Synges is English in its speech, as is the oratory of their Burkes, Currans and O'Connells. Their soldiers and diplomatists, French and Roberts, Macartney and Macdonnell have found a great sphere in the administration and defence of the British Empire. Irish journalists like the well-known T. P. are as much at home in London as in Dublin or Cork. The richest province of Ireland is English in feeling and would fight to maintain the union with Britain. In such circumstances there should be some way of satisfying all reasonable demands of Ireland without a separation which would directly increase the possible area of war and add to the already heavy burdens which any League of Peace will have to bear.

It is quite evident that everywhere, and nowhere more than in Canada, the principle of nationalism applied without regard to conditions, actual and historical, would involve a great increase of conflicts which can be settled only by war, unless the great Powers can constitute themselves into a Court of Justice for the maintenance of order and hold themselves ready to enforce its decrees. The British people would like that you can see by their enthusiastic acclamations of Wilson, but evidently they feel they dare not altogether trust to it. The peoples do not know enough about each other's situation and problems yet, and no government can move now unless it is confident of the approbation of its people. There never was a clearer case than the German invasion of Belgium, there never will be. Yet President Wilson's reply to the appeal of

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Belgium was a discreet *Judicat orbis terrarum*, and it would have been difficult for him to do much more, with the nation still very much at sea on the subject of the war and a strong force of Ridders, Hearsts, O'Learys pulling the other way. Even in Britain, where the issues were naturally clearer, there was a very influential section which opposed all intervention up to the last hour. Some Cabinet ministers even resigned, but Asquith and Grey—be it remembered to their credit now—stood firm. That will be pretty much the situation always in international questions. With some six millions of soldiers actually in the field at the present moment, French, British, American and Italian, we do not see our way to put a stop to the Bolshevik raids on Esthonia, the pillage and murder in the Ukraine or the chaotic warfare of Russians, Poles, and Czecho-Slovaks. There are embarrassing considerations of all kinds.

France also feels she has got to look facts squarely in the face. She has suffered too much to be unduly optimistic and her leading statesmen say so bluntly enough. "We have been attacked," says M. Pichon, "and we want security." That is, I suppose, a more defensible frontier. And Premier Clemenceau pronounces frankly in favour of the "old system of alliances" and quietly reminds President Wilson that "America took her time to come in."

There is nothing to depress us in those facts, our fathers have faced situations that were worse coolly enough; the first great victory has been won, but there is need to realize that any organization for peace must be founded on facts and not merely on hopeful theories.

JAMES CAPPON.